582 The NORTHWESTERN CAUCASIANS. No one will take it amiss if an old Kabardian marries a young girl. Although the Cherkess tribes along the coast of the Black Sea strongly discourage such pairing, disparity of age is not considered a marriage impediment.[167] While on his expedition in Circassia in 1927, Ladyženskij found no case of a young *man* marrying an old lady.[168]

Taking the Avars as an example of the NORTHEASTERNERS—marriages between rich old men of 50 to 60 and girls of 12 were not uncommon in the last part of the nineteenth century.[169]

Although neither customary nor Islamic law establish an absolute minimum age,[170] the *adats* sometime determine a *relative* marriage age. Thus a young man sometimes may not marry before his older brother, as is the case, for example among the Chechens[171] and the Cherkess.[172] Only if his brother happens to be [428] far from home and gives his explicit permission, may he marry. Anyone acting contrary to this customary law would *ipso facto* lose all rights to the family inheritance. In spite of this heavy sanction, the bride-price *(kalym)* would be paid for the offender and the marriage would be considered valid. The *adats* of the Cherkess are even stricter about girls marrying before their older sisters. To marry without her parents' permission before her older sister would bring upon her the curse of the family ; in fact, they would even refuse the " filthy " brideprice. The motive behind these customs is to assure a marriage for the older members of the family before they become too old.[172a]

2. Debt as an Impediment

[426] According to the adat collection of the Dzher, Kist, Galgai, Tsori, Ingushi and Karabulak tribes a father may not give his daughter in marriage to anyone before he receives permission from his creditor.[173]

3. The Obligation of Proving One's Bravery before Marriage

171 582 Baddeley informs us of another very peculiar marriage impediment. " In Deedo-land, formerly, no man would give his daughter or sister in marriage to a suitor who had not at least one Georgian right hand or arm nailed to the wall of his dwelling." [174] This was, no doubt, intended as a proof of the lover's mettle before the father of the girl would give his consent.[175] Such tests as a *conditio sine qua non* for marriage are found throughout the world, sometimes

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[167] Ladyženskij, FT, pp. 196 f. Castagné, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

[168] Ladyženskij, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

[169] L'vov, " Domašnjaja i semejnaja žizn etc.," p. 20 *note*.

[170] This is especially evidenced by the widespread practice of infant betrothal and marriage in the North Caucasus and neighbourhood (*infra*, pp. 76, 78 ff).

[171] Erckert, *Der Kaukasus*, p. 138.

[172] Ladyženskij, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

[172a] *ibid.*

[173] Leontovič, II, p. 115, § 8.

[174] Baddeley, *The Rugged Flanks of Caucasus*, II, p. 81.

[175] This seems to have been a shortlived observance.